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SPEECH BY MR CH'NG JIT KOON, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY  
SECRETARY (PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE), AT THE THREE-  
TIER GENERATION MOONCAKE FESTIVAL CELEBRATIONS  
AT THE TIONG BARHU COMMUNITY CENTRE  
ON SUNDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 1983 AT 7.30 PM

It is my pleasure to be here this evening together with so many happy families and residents to celebrate the Mooncake Festival.

Like the Chinese New Year, the Mooncake Festival has traditionally been an auspicious occasion for family gathering among the Chinese in Singapore. It is a useful way of preserving the family ties.

This evening's function brings several multi-tier families closer together. It gives the participants an excellent opportunity not only to strengthen their own family ties but also to foster a sense of community spirit among themselves. I would, therefore, like to commend all those who have helped in making this innovative activity a success.

In recent years, the government has introduced various measures to preserve the family ties in recognition of the important role the family plays in the inculcation of good moral values among the young. The first of such measure is the joint balloting scheme introduced by the HDB in 1975. This scheme encourages the aged parents and the children to live close to each other but in separate HDB flats. The latest measure is the multi-tier family

priority scheme. It goes one step further to encourage the aged parents and their children to live together under one roof in HDB flats. A considerable number of multi-tier families have benefited from these two incentive schemes. These families include some who live in Tiong Bahru Constituency.

However, the two schemes introduced by HDB are mere incentive for the young to live together with their parents or grand-parents. It will not necessarily guarantee a happy multi-tier family. To preserve the family ties and a happy home, we must exercise tolerance and show our respect and concern to other members in the family. We must also be aware of our responsibility towards the elderly in the family and in the society at large.

On the other hand, we have to recognise the fact that not all parents and children are able to live together for one reason or another. It is not always within the means of every multi-tier family to buy two adjacent three-room flats or a five-room flat. It is also very difficult for those who live in one or two-room rented flat to keep a multi-tier family under one roof. But this does not mean that the aged parents in those families should be left to fend for themselves in abject loneliness.

There are several ways and means in which the young can fulfil their filial obligations towards their parents. For instance, they should continue to give their aged parents the financial support and try to visit them or bring them out as often as possible. In this way, they will be able to preserve the feeling of attachment to one another in the family without having to live under one roof.

Within the community, the various grassroots organisations like the CCC, CCMC and the RCs can play a useful role in providing a conducive environment and suitable activities to draw the elderly together to overcome the boredom and loneliness when their children are not with them. A case in point is the Senior Citizens' Club organised by the Management Committee of the Tiong Bahru Community Centre. It provides a useful avenue for the elderly to get together to acquire new friends and companions and pursue their own hobbies and interests. Perhaps the RCs can supplement the effort of this Senior Citizens' Club by organising more regular family gatherings and outings for the elderly and their children within their respective zones.

Finally I wish all of you here an enjoyable evening.

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